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SUBJECT: Georgia: Supportive Reaction to President Obama's Speech on Afghanistan and Pakistan

11. (U) Summary: In line with Georgia's strong support of the mission in Afghanistan, senior Georgian officials and the MFA have publicly endorsed the plan laid out by President Obama on December 1st. Georgia's support is backed up by contributions: in November, Georgia sent 170 troops under the command of the French to support operations in Kabul. Georgia's 31st battalion is currently completing preparations for a deployment of 700 soldiers with U.S. Marines, which is planned for March 2010. Further contributions are reportedly under consideration (septel). All national broadcasters emphasized Saakashvili's support for the strategy and quoted his spokesman saying, "The Georgian President stated that Afghanistan is not just a U.S. or NATO problem. This problem concerns the entire world, therefore Georgia feels obliged to participate in this mission." End Summary.

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ENDORSES NEW PLAN

12. (U) This statement was provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is posted at [mfa.gov.ge](http://mfa.gov.ge).

Begin text:

Georgia welcomes President Barack Obama's decision to send additional military and civilian forces to Afghanistan. Georgia supports the Obama administration's new strategy which foresees additional military and civilian efforts, strengthening of local security forces that will ultimately allow Afghans to assume the responsibility for the security of their own country and a strategy that foresees expanded partnership with Pakistan. Georgia, as a strategic partner and a friend supports the US in its effort to ensure and promote peace, stability and security in the world; Georgia's resolve to contribute troops to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) is an attestation to this fact. In November 2009, Georgia deployed a reinforced company to Afghanistan under the French command and will deploy a battalion under the US command in spring 2010. Georgia believes that it is important to intensify international efforts through combining efforts so that it becomes possible to defeat terrorism in Afghanistan and Pakistan through joint efforts and strategic coordination to strengthen World peace and stability.

End Statement.

MEDIA REACTION

13. (U) Daily newspaper 24 Hours ran the text of President Obama's address to the nation along with a photo of the President with West Point cadets. National broadcasters Rustavi-2 and the Georgian Public Broadcaster covered fully President Obama's address to the nation at West Point. Media emphasized that the strategy first and foremost responded to U.S. national security interests, and coverage also focused on Georgia's contribution to ISAF and to global security. Commentators express their hope that Georgian armed forces will benefit from participation in ISAF by achieving interoperability with NATO standards. National Broadcaster Imedi focused on the Georgian presence in Afghanistan and featured Deputy Defense Minister Nick Vashakidze saying: "Our participation in Afghanistan is considered broad and significant." Rustavi-2 pointed out that Secretary Clinton will follow up on President Obama's new strategy during her visit to the NATO ministerial in Brussels. All national broadcasters emphasized President Saakashvili support for the strategy: "The Georgian President stated that Afghanistan is not just a U.S. or NATO problem. This problem concerns the entire world, therefore Georgia feels obliged to participate in this

mission."

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